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ABSTRACT

Noting that educators are charged with the task of promoting lifelong development and self-sufficiency in students through academic excellence, this report discusses how community schools in Illinois provide an innovative route for achieving the vision of enabling all Illinois students to become confident, self-sufficient, and productive citizens. The report defines community schools as partnerships linking schools, families, and communities to promote better outcomes for children, youth, families, schools, and communities. The report discusses how community schools draw stakeholders from various arenas, provide school-linked or school-based services/activities that promote lifelong learning and development throughout the community, equip parents to help children learn, provide after-school activities, strengthen parent-teacher relationships, and increase the number of caring adults in children's lives. In addition, the report summarizes benefits of community schools, presents several models for community schools, and describes how some Illinois communities have forged partnerships that support community school goals. The report concludes with recommendations that the state of Illinois: (1) implement a statewide task force to identify the programmatic and administrative needs of and opportunities for community schools in Illinois and to develop a funding framework and statewide strategic plan; (2) create a center for academics, policymakers, educators, human service providers, families, and advocates to advance knowledge about community schools and support statewide efforts; and (3) establish the Kids Share Endowment to fund community collaborations focused on the healthy development, of children, youth, families, and communities. A list of community school resources is appended. (Contains 24 endnotes.) (KB)

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A publication of the Community Collaboration Project

Community Schools in Illinois:

Partnerships Promoting Academic Excellence and Lifelong Development

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This paper was written to stimulate discussion about community schools because community schools can promote lifelong learning and development for all of Illinois' children, youth, families and communities. To create that discussion, and to put Illinois on a path toward meeting our recommendations, we would like to request that readers disseminate this paper. Please feel free to make multiple copies.

About Voices for Illinois Children

Voices for Illinois Children is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan group of child advocates who work with families, communities and policy-makers to ensure that all children grow up healthy, nurtured, safe and well educated. Through policy analysis, public education and outreach, Voices generates support from civic, business and community leaders for cost-effective and practical proposals to improve the lives of Illinois children. Jerome Stermer is the President of Voices for Illinois Children, and Lorraine Barba is the Chair of the Board of Directors.

If you would like to provide feedback on this paper or learn more about community schools, please call Voices for Illinois Children at (312) 456-0600 or e-mail at communityschools@voices4kids.org.

If you would like to sign up for Voices' newsletter, "Community Schools Online," please e-mail communityschools@voices4kids.org. You can also call (312) 456-0600 to receive a faxed copy of the newsletter.

If you would like to hold a forum about community schools and other issues that affect your community, please call Voices at (312) 456-0600 for a free copy of our Community Forum Discusssion Guide.

The Vision of Community Schools

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN ILLINOIS:

Partnerships Promoting Academic Excellence and Lifelong Learning

Executive Summary

As a nation, we charge public education with the task of promoting lifelong development and self-sufficiency in our students through academic excellence. We expect educators to achieve this mission for a highly diverse group of students in the face of myriad challenges: school violence, poverty, lack of classroom supports, multiple demands on parents' time and more. Students may enter school socially and academically unready to learn. Yet, we often blame educators when students leave school unprepared to lead productive, self-sufficient adult lives.

The citizens of Illinois and the Illinois State Board of Education recognize the magnitude of educators' charge and the necessity to involve a wide group of stakeholders to accomplish it. The Board accepted a challenge and vision for the 21st century developed by the citizens of Illinois. It involves a mission "to enable all Illinois students to become confident, self-sufficient and productive citizens." To achieve that vision, the Illinois goals involve shared decision-making at the local level, accountability for outcomes, school-family-community partnerships and links between private and public agencies to bring children and families the services they need.

Community schools are an innovative route for achieving this vision and for supporting teachers, students and families navigating the educational system. Broadly defined, community schools are partnerships linking schools, families and communities to promote better outcomes for children, youth, families, schools and communities. Rather than simply providing additional programs, community schools weave together an array of needed services and resources for the entire community that support the schools' academic missions.

Community schools are hubs for school-linked or school-based services and activities that promote lifelong learning and development throughout a community.

Community schools draw stakeholders from arenas such as health, social and emotional development, the arts, business and families. Community schools are hubs for school-linked or school-based services and activities that promote lifelong learning and development throughout a community. Community schools equip parents to help children learn, ensure after-school activities support academic and social development, strengthen the relationships between parents and teachers and increase the number of caring adults in children's lives. Partners collaboratively determine community needs and collaboratively develop systems of accountability and evaluation.

With both the school and the broader community attending to children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development, teachers in a community school can focus on academic excellence for their students. Community schools across the nation improve outcomes similar to those that the Illi-

nois State Board of Education wants to achieve: improved test scores, increased attendance, increased parent involvement, better school climate, reduced student mobility and a lessening of non-academic barriers to learning (e.g., poor health). Community schools can simultaneously meet the goals of other state programs such as violence prevention, workforce development and job training, to name a few.

Multiple community school models have developed around the nation. For example, the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) seeks to create "comprehensive, university-assisted community schools that are the social, service delivery, and educational hubs for the entire community." The West Philadelphia Partnership—a mediating nonprofit—brings together institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania, community leaders and neighborhood organizations and coordinates WEPIC initiatives in conjunction with the school district of Philadelphia. School personnel, university faculty and students select activities that focus on community improvement.

Since its inception in 1985, WEPIC has grown into a year-round program serving more than 7,000 children, their parents and communities based in 13 different schools. Ultimately, WEPIC wants to help develop 24-hour-a-day schools that serve as a community's core building. Individual school reports show positive results such as improved reading and math scores, increased student attendance, increased parent involvement and a decrease in suspensions. For example, the Charles Drew Elementary School showed an improvement of 420 points on the state's standardized reading and math tests—an increase higher than any other school in Pennsylvania.

Certain Illinois communities have begun weaving community school models into programming at the local level and have forged partnerships that support community school goals. For example, in Chicago, Youth Guidance has implemented the Comer School Development Program in 26 schools. Comer Schools achieve positive outcomes such as increased student achievement and improved school climate by strengthening and redefining relationships between students, principals, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in youth.

Recommendations:

In order to support citizens' efforts to learn from nationwide innovations and develop exemplary, effective community school initiatives, we recommend that the state of Illinois accomplish the following:

1. Implement a statewide task force to identify the programmatic and administrative needs of and opportunities for community schools in Illinois and to develop a funding framework and statewide strategic plan.

2. Create a center for academics, policy-makers, educators, human service providers, families and advocates from across Illinois to come together to advance our knowledge about community schools and support our efforts to develop policies, partnerships and resources that support community schools.

3. Establish the Kids Share Endowment to fund community collaborations focused on the healthy development of children, youth, families and communities.

The Realities of the Road to Educational Excellence

As a society, we expect public education to achieve academic excellence, lifelong development and self-sufficiency for all students beyond the school years in the face of many forms of diversity that create both opportunities for learning and multiple challenges. The children populating our schools come from a wide array of backgrounds, cultures and economic situations. For example, in 1999, Illinois public school students spoke 107 languages, and 137,717 students participated in bilingual education programs.[1] In 1997, single parents headed 27% of Illinois households with children.[2] In 2000, 182,239 children lived in families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.[3]

These culturally, socially and economically diverse students enter classrooms with varying levels of readiness. In the academic sense, a kindergarten class may exhibit skill levels ranging from not knowing the alphabet to reading well above age-appropriate levels. A similar range occurs on the social-emotional side of school readiness; children vary in their ability to complete tasks such as following directions or communicating their needs.[4]

Children's readiness for school and the resulting success or failure of this early transition influences their later achievements. In the 1999-2000 school year, a significant number of third-grade students did not meet Illinois learning standards: 40% did not meet standards in reading, 31% in mathematics, and 44% in writing. Tenth-grade students showed similar achievement levels: 30% did not meet reading standards, 47% did not meet mathematics standards and 34% did not meet standards in writing. In addition to the significant number of high school students not meeting testing standards, 34,146 teens dropped out of high school.[5] Increased social-emotional and academic readiness for all students could assuage the rate of failure.

The current social situation of Illinois children heightens this classroom complexity. Many characteristics of our student population place them at risk for a host of negative outcomes, including academic failure and school dropout. According to *Illinois Kids Count 2001*,[6] in Illinois:

- 17.5% of children live in poverty.[7]
- 40.3% of students were poor enough to receive free or reduced-price lunches.[8]
- 33,664 children live in substitute or foster care.[9]

As a result, teachers and administrators must often act as social workers, counselors, police, parents and doctors. If a student falls behind, catching up becomes a dismal process. Despite these inherent challenges, we expect teachers to prepare all students to be productive members of an ever-diversifying society. Further, we lay blame on educators when students do not succeed academically and leave school unprepared for future challenges.

Achieving success in the school setting requires that we simultaneously address the conditions and risks that impede educational excellence and promote protective qualities in a community that encourage success.[10] Illinois citizens have resolutely conveyed their support for this task through two statewide efforts:

1. Creating the vision, mission and goals of the Illinois State Board of Education; and
2. Voicing their commitment to helping all chil-

dren meet their potential by developing and endorsing the *Charter for Illinois Children.*

First, Illinois citizens developed the mission of Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) through a process supported by multiple statewide stakeholders in education. This mission focuses on enabling all students to become confident, self-sufficient, productive citizens; supporting an ever-changing, lifelong learning process; and acting as an advocate, provider and broker of community, family and state resources. The Board and Illinois citizens accepted a number of goals as guiding principles in the work of education. In addition to academic improvements, the ISBE and Illinois aim to:

- Promote maximum flexibility for shared decision-making at the local level.
- Actively develop the support, involvement and commitment of a school's community by the establishment of partnerships and/or linkages.
- Ensure that each child in Illinois will receive the support services (e.g., health, human, social) necessary to enter the public school system ready to learn and progress successfully through school.[11]

Second, hundreds of individuals and organizations from across the state together developed the *Charter for Illinois Children* in February 1999. The *Charter* is a clear and comprehensive statement of a common vision for the children of Illinois and the responsibilities that all stakeholders in Illinois must share to help children thrive and succeed. The *Charter* endorsers state:

> ***We are committed to the well being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. For children to prosper, we must meet all their basic needs. We must nurture each child through the full and active participation of families and the broader community, including neighborhoods, schools, business, faith communities and government. When children realize their potential and fulfill their dreams, our communities flourish and we are enriched beyond measure.*** [12]

If Illinois schools and communities pursue and accomplish these visions, missions and goals, they can reduce the power of risky conditions that can impede positive development such as poverty, a lack of medical care and an excess of unstructured after-school hours. They can concurrently promote protective qualities such as positive relationships between children, youth and adults; enrichment opportunities for children and youth; and connections between families and needed services.

Acheiving success in the school setting requires that we simultaneously address the conditions and risks that impede educational excellence and promote protective qulities in a community that encourages success.

Community Schools: A Vehicle for Excellence

Community schools provide a vehicle by which schools can address risky conditions and promote positive qualities to achieve the Illinois goals for education and the vision of the *Charter* for all students throughout the state. As a number of Illinois communities already understand, educational excellence, self-sufficiency and lifelong learning will improve through strong, well-designed school-family-community partnerships aimed at achieving these goals. The relatively new community school efforts in Illinois (described below) all work in the following framework.

Community schools are partnerships and places that bring together elements that promote lifelong learning and academic excellence. Parents, educators, community residents and local leaders work within schools and neighborhood institutions to offer a range of services, supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. Community schools are often open for extended periods – early, late, on weekends. If schools are unable to extend their hours or lack adequate space, partner organizations are open and offer programs and services. These elements can help to ensure several key results:

- √ Young children are ready to learn when they enter school.
- √ Children and youth are ready to learn every day.
- √ Children and youth learn and achieve at high levels.
- √ Youth are prepared for productive adulthood and citizenship.
- √ Families are supported, strengthened and have learning opportunities.
- √ Families and communities are partners in education.
- √ Community members are active and productive participants.

Schools, organizations and community members can all spearhead a community school initiative and together must determine where ownership lies. Partners come together in recognition of the fact that a community school can effectively and efficiently serve the needs of children, youth, their families and community members. Community school initiatives may focus on one school, whole school districts or the entire state. Partners can generate funding through foundations, private donations and the public sector (local, state and federal governments and agencies). Regardless of an initiative's size or financing methods, school-family-community partnerships can tailor their community schools to meet identified needs and promote a host of positive outcomes.

Community schools link the services, support and expertise of multiple partners to a place where children and families can access them -- the school setting.

Community Schools Promote Positive Results: Academic Achievement

The United Way's Bridges to Success (BTS) program aims to improve student performance and build the self-sufficiency of families and communities. BTS programs partner local schools with local United Ways and adhere to standards such as accountability and services and support management. At the Hampton Year Round Elementary School, a BTS adaptation in North Carolina, reading, writing and math proficiency for grades three to five improved from 45% to 63% between 1997 and 1999.

Summary: Benefits of Community Schools For ...

Children and Youth

- √ Master academic skills and acquire new knowledge
- √ Master life skills
- √ Find safe places
- √ Connect school to real life
- √ Learn the value of service
- √ Improve academic achievement
- √ Increase attendance
- √ Gain leadership opportunities
- √ Find recreation opportunities
- √ Enhance social skills
- √ Develop positive relationships with adults
- √ Reduce student mobility

Teachers and Schools

- √ Help students overcome non-academic barriers
- √ Increase support from families and other volunteers
- √ Work with parents as partners
- √ Improve students' academic achievement
- √ Increase attendance rates
- √ Reduce student mobility
- √ Increase variety of learning opportunities and ways to learn
- √ Support staff efforts to improve academic achievement

Families

- √ Find opportunities for lifelong learning
- √ Connect with other families in the community
- √ Gain support for the role of the family in education
- √ Work with teachers as partners
- √ Encounter opportunities for leadership and decision-making
- √ Be involved in fostering children's learning
- √ Find volunteer opportunities
- √ Find access to supports for children and families

Communities

- √ Community institutions (ranging from neighborhood groups to government at all levels) able to accomplish objectives more efficiently and effectively by using schools as a resource
- √ Engage more adults in community events and organizations
- √ Mobilize assets toward learning and development
- √ Establish a foundation for mutual accountability
- √ Establish meaningful relationships between adults and youth

A Key Ingredient: Parent and Family Involvement

Effective community schools build strong connections to families. Families are children's first teachers and primary caregivers. Research shows that family involvement in education results in children achieving better grades and improved attendance, improved attitudes and behaviors in schools, higher graduation rates, and increased enrollment in higher education.[13]

Family involvement in the planning, operation and evaluation stages encourages quality by instilling a sense of school ownership in families and throughout communities. Ownership bolsters commitment. Collaborating with parents to identify and develop needed services ensures that programming will be relevant to their children.

With a focus on outcomes, families and other community school partners can evaluate program effectiveness and ensure that their programs change with the dynamic needs of their children and community. In fact, community schools experience increased parent involvement.

For example, a West Philadelphia Improvement Corps program that partners the University of Pennsylvania and other community members and organizations with the Turner Middle School in Philadelphia reported an increase in parent involvement (percentage of parents attending events) from 53% to 75%. At the Bryant School, a Missouri Caring Communities School that implemented an intensive family intervention program, volunteer hours increased from 43 in 1996 to 2,008 in 1998.[14]

"More than 20 years of research indicate that children benefit from family-school collaborations, which provide parents with opportunities to shape their children's learning."

-- Dr. Heather Weiss
Harvard Family
Research Project

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has developed National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs [15] in partnership with the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. The PTA and partners designed these research-based standards to guide families, educators and communities through the process of involving parents in their children's education. Community school goals regarding school-family-community connections are consistent with the following standards that the Illinois PTA actively champions throughout the state:

1. **Communicating** – Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.

2. **Parenting** – Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

3. **Student Learning** – Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

4. **Volunteering** – Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

5. **School Decision-Making and Advocacy** – Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

6. **Collaborating with Community** – Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

The Community School Concept: A Framework for Building

The community school concept provides a framework for assessing a community's needs and resources and for developing the school-family-community partnerships that can improve outcomes for children, youth and their communities. This framework ensures that community schools are both effective and "unique -- a 'homegrown' match between a community's strengths and needs."[16]

Although there is no single process followed by all community schools, effective community schools share many characteristics. These shared approaches and principles support the Illinois goals for education.

For example, most community schools focus on both readiness to learn and youth-adult relationships because of their significant impact on children's lifetime, healthy outcomes. According to a recent report on school readiness, "Children who do not begin kindergarten socially and emotionally competent are often not successful in the early years of school -- and can be plagued by behavioral, emotional, academic and social development problems that follow them into adulthood."[17] Research also shows that youth engaged in meaningful relationships with adults experience positive outcomes such as educational success.[18] In consequence, child care and before- and after-school programs are core components of many community schools.

The community school approach includes a number of key premises such as collaboration and high expectations for all stakeholders that ensure results are achieved in a manner that reflects the community. A collaboration among community partners that provides an equal voice to everyone involved is the best way for a community to identify existing resources and to focus on priority needs.

For example, Henry, Randolph, Champaign and Cook county schools may all possess resources for encouraging school readiness. However, those resources may differ from school to school, district to district, and county to county (e.g., space, expertise, manpower, etc.). Each locale would develop homegrown services and programs to support school readiness that are suited to its needs and resources. High expectations hold the entire community accountable for desired results.

Community School Collaborators

- √ Schools
- √ Parents
- √ Social service organizations
- √ Local government
- √ Park districts
- √ Hospitals
- √ Child care providers
- √ Youth development programs
- √ Law enforcement officials
- √ Business leaders
- √ Religious groups
- √ Civic groups
- √ Head Start providers
- √ Museums
- √ Many more ...

Community School Operating Principles

- √ Community defined and community driven
- √ Foster strong partnerships/collaborate
- √ Focus on outcomes
- √ Share accountability for results
- √ Set high expectations for all
- √ Build on the community's strengths
- √ Embrace diversity
- √ Use integrated and diverse resources

The Community School Concept: A Continuum for Growth

The community school approach provides a developmental continuum along which partners can work as they try to meet identified needs and develop school-family-community partnerships (*see figure, p. 11*). Every point along the continuum has the potential to promote quality outcomes for children, youth, families and communities if schools intentionally combine programming with goals such as partnership and strong links between different services (i.e., service integration). The uniqueness of community schools highlights the varying stages of development and places the schools at different points on the continuum.

As the most extensive community school model, a "full-service" or "comprehensive" community school represents the end-point of the continuum. Full-service/comprehensive community schools encompass all of the elements in the community school framework (e.g., health, social and cultural programs and services that respond to the community's interests and needs; extensive partnership with family and community resources; integrated services; extended hours for the school building; etc.).

Although not all community schools are full-service/comprehensive community schools, many schools have expanded programs and services designed to address specific concerns. These school-based (on-site) or school-linked (off-site) services place the schools along the developmental continuum.

Community schools move along the developmental continuum as school-family-community collaborators expand and link more of their services and programs for children, youth, families and communities and as they adopt community school operating principles (*see inset, previous page*).

For example, quality out-of-school-time programs that are integrated with the school day can place a school along the developmental continuum. A growing movement across America recognizes the importance of after-school programming for positive youth development.

After-school programs are an essential component of all community schools. More than 28 million children have parents who work outside the home.[19] These children need the safe places provided by out-of-school programming in the early morning, in the evenings and on weekends.

The community school approach provides a developmental continuum along which partners can work as they try to meet identified needs and develop school-family-community partnerships.

In addition, children and youth benefit from the opportunities provided by quality after-school programs designed to bolster or complement school performance (e.g., service learning, mentoring, recreation, tutoring and social skill development).

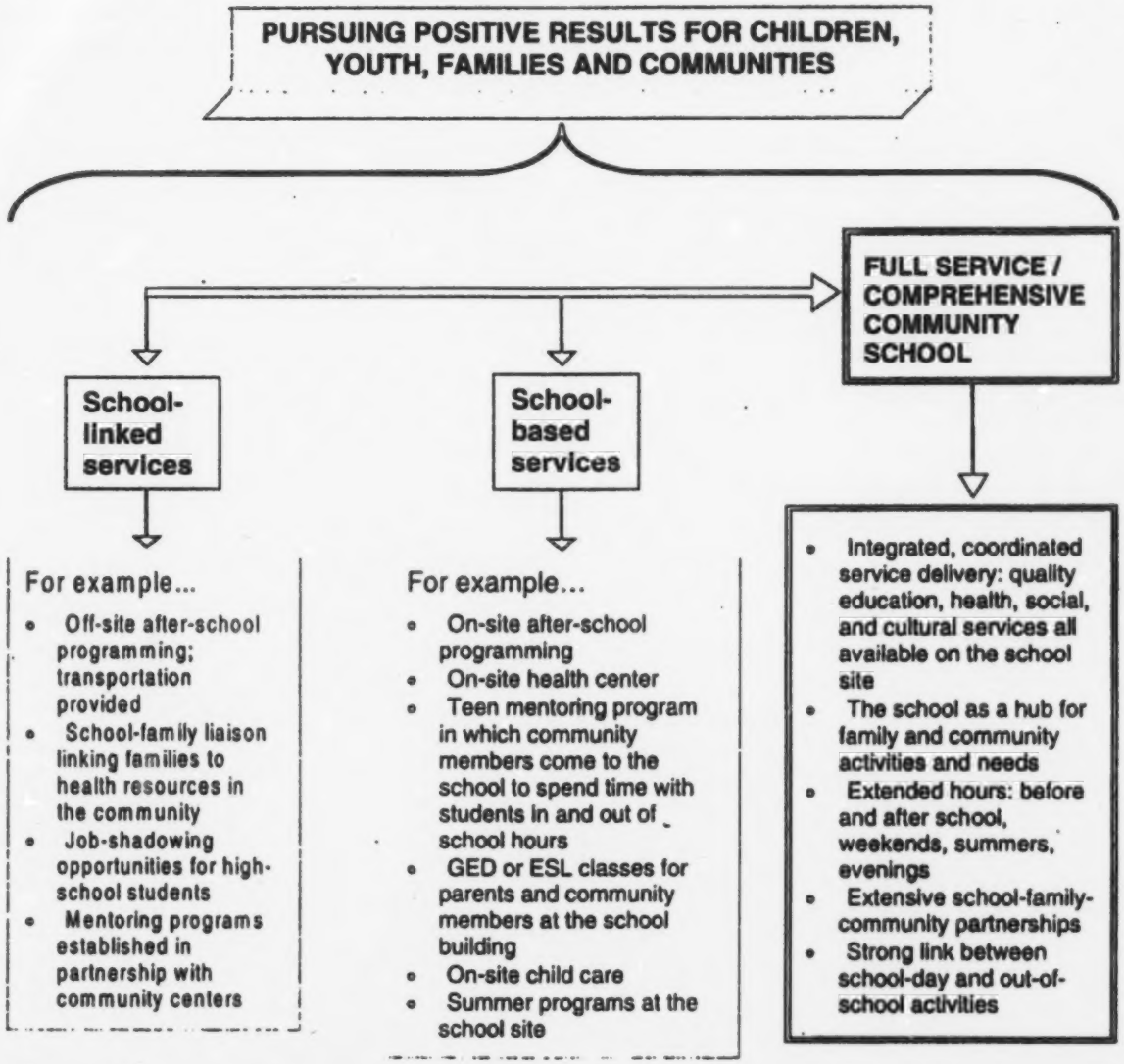
The Illinois Department of Human Services' Teen REACH program is a funding initiative that addresses these out-of-school time needs.

Teen REACH programs develop structured activities in partnership with a host of community agencies. By offering programming to teens, preteens and school-aged children while they are not in the classroom, Teen REACH is designed to influence academic achievement and youth involvement in the community as well as reduce teen pregnancy and juvenile crime.

Because the highest-quality after-school programs create linkages between the school day and after-school personnel,[20] a link between Teen REACH and a community school could amplify the program's effects.

The Community School Continuum

Combining Program and Process


PURSUING POSITIVE RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
FULL SERVICE / COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL
School-linked services
School-based services
For example...
Off-site after-school programming; transportation provided
School-family liaison linking families to health resources in the community
Job-shadowing opportunities for high-school students
Mentoring programs established in partnership with community centers
For example...
On-site after-school programming
On-site health center
Teen mentoring program in which community members come to the school to spend time with students in and out of school hours
GED or ESL classes for parents and community members at the school building
On-site child care
Summer programs at the school site
Integrated, coordinated service delivery: quality education, health, social, and cultural services all available on the school site
The school as a hub for family and community activities and needs
Extended hours: before and after school, weekends, summers, evenings
Extensive school-family-community partnerships
Strong link between school-day and out-of-school activities

The Community School Continuum: Following the continuum from its starting point on the left to its endpoint on the right highlights the multiple stages of development through which a community school can progress. A school achieves community school status by combining "school-linked services" and "school-based services" (such as the examples provided in the above figure) with the process elements described under "full-service/comprehensive community school." Extra programs and services do not define a community school. Rather, the process and the program together achieve the positive results associated with community schools.

Community Schools in Action

Communities across the nation have developed community school initiatives and replicable frameworks to achieve a wide array of positive results (see Table 1, above; see p.12). Moreover, many states have developed policies to promote and support community schools. Illinois does not have a statewide agenda, but a few exemplary initiatives underway in the state are listed below. The nationwide examples that follow provide a small sample of the creative efforts across the country.

In Illinois:

√ Supported by the Polk Bros. Foundation, three **Chicago public elementary schools** have developed full-service schools in partnership with community organizations. For example, the Brentano Math & Science Academy and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association partner to provide health, recreation, education, parent mentoring and social service programs to children and families during school and non-school hours.

The Polk Bros.' initiative focused on making the school more welcoming to families and strengthening school-family partnerships. Consequently, they have seen positive outcomes in areas such as reading and math scores and increases in the number of adults connected to the schools. The Polk Bros. Foundation committed a total of $1.2 million to three schools over a four-year period.

Many states have developed policies to promote and support community schools. Illinois does not have a statewide agenda, but a few exemplary initiatives are underway.

√ For almost 10 years, Project Success sites throughout the state have been running programs and providing services that fall within the community schools framework. Project Success brings community members together to provide necessary supports for their children to succeed in school.

The **Dongola Unit School** in Dongola (south

of Carbondale) is one of many Project Success sites. A community collaboration at the Dongola school provides multiple school-based and school-linked services including recreation, tutoring, family education, arts programs, community-improvement activities and job training. Programs are open to the entire community and continually strengthen school-family-community partnerships.

Although Project Success was not included in the governor's fiscal year 2002 budget proposal, Project Success initiatives may be able to continue some of their activities under the auspices of Teen REACH.

√ Communities in Schools of **Aurora's Cowherd Community Partners** were honored in 1999 with the Award for Excellence in Community Collaboration for Children and Youth Programs. This national recognition was from the Washington, D.C.-based Local Collaboration for Children and Youth.

Communities in Schools (CIS) is a nationwide network that champions the connection of needed community resources to schools to help young people learn. In essence, CIS helps find partners

for schools that are trying to transform their schools into community schools.

The Cowherd Middle School initiative connects 27 agencies to the school to meet its population's needs. Among the multiple efforts offered, parents staff and operate a family resource center at Cowherd.

Nationwide Initiatives:

√ **California's Healthy Start** grew out of 1991 legislation and is now one of the largest school-linked service initiatives. Healthy Start schools provide school-integrated services to meet the needs of children, families and communities in California and overcome barriers to education.

Local initiatives strive for measurable improvements in areas such as school readiness, educational success, physical health, emotional support and family strength. More than 1,500 schools have participated in Healthy Start since its inception.

California Healthy Start has a $39 million total cost to the state. Local educational agencies (school districts or county offices of education) and their collaborative partners can receive $50,000 planning grants, $100,000 start-up grants and $300,000 three- to five-year operational grants per site. Healthy Start grantees must match state funds with at least 25% in cash, services or resources. [21]

√ **The Caring Communities initiative in Missouri** is a school-linked support and services delivery strategy administered by the Missouri Family Investment Trust. This state-level, public-private partnership enhances how communities and state government work together to improve outcomes for children and families.

More than 110 schools in 18 communities have adapted the Caring Communities strategy to meet their needs. The Caring Communities' budget of $5.6 million is a cross-agency budget of seven state agencies. Caring Community sites receive additional funds from the federal level and charitable and business donations. The per-site budget is $560,000. [22]

√ **Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Centers** (FRYSC) are school-based centers with the primary goal of removing non-cognitive barriers to students' learning. Centers develop programming in direct response to local needs and community input. A FRYSC might provide services including child care, new parent support, health service referrals, employment services and family, mental health and alcohol/drug abuse counseling.

Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Centers develop programming in direct response to local needs and community input.

Schools with at least 20% of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price school meals can qualify for grants to initiate FRYSCs. Approximately 45% of Kentucky's 519,359 students qualify for free and reduced-price lunches.

Grants range from $33,000 to $90,000 depending on the number of qualifying students in a school. Once centers are established, they are eligible for continuation grants ranging from $33,825 to $92,250. Kentucky's 702 FRYSCs serve 1,084 schools (approximately 93% of Kentucky's qualifying schools). In fiscal year 2001, More than $47.7 million was spent on FRYSCs, and most of the funding came from Kentucky's Department of Education. [23]

Community Schools: Showing Results

Community schools along the continuum are showing positive results for children and youth, families, teachers, schools and communities.[24] In fact, most of the initiatives discussed below demonstrate promising results in multiple areas. These select results are a subset of the benefits derived from school-family-community connections.

Students:

Academic Improvements

√ At PS 5, a Children's Aid Society Community School in New York, the percentage of children reading at grade level rose from 28% in fourth grade to 42% by the time the students reached sixth grade.

√ In the Caring Communities program at Waldbridge Elementary School in Missouri, a program that concentrates on developing school-linked services at the local level, the students who received the most intensive services had a 23% increase in their grade point averages.

√ The Chicago Comer School Development Program, implemented in partnership with the Chicago organization Youth Guidance, aims to achieve a school's academic and social goals through collaborative relationships. In addition to an improvement in academic climate, reading and math scores improved in Comer schools over and above improvements in other Chicago schools.[25]

Attendance

√ Students participating in Pittsburgh's Manchester Craftsman's Guild Arts Collaborative, a non-profit organization that provides teenagers with arts training and apprenticeships and connects arts to school, had significantly higher school attendance rates than those who did not participate.

√ The Gardner Elementary School in Boston, a partnership that offers before- and after-school programming in addition to economic, health and education services to adults, experienced improved attendance among students.

√ West Philadelphia Improvement Corps and the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania partnered with Turner Middle School in Philadelphia to offer services the partners identified together. The result was increased daily attendance -- from 86% to 89% -- and a decrease in the number of student suspensions, which fell from 302 to 102.

Families and Parents:

√ **Access to Social Support:** Parents who work at Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Center perceive increased social support from both school personnel and outside sources.

√ **Improved Parent Involvement:** The Hampton Year Round Elementary School in Greensboro, N.C., which offers services such as transportation to health care and out-of-school activities, experienced improved parent participation.

√ **Increased Parent Leadership:** The Logan Square Neighborhood Association partners with schools in Chicago's Logan Square and Avondale

communities. Evidence shows that their efforts have developed parents' leadership skills throughout the neighborhood through a parent/teacher mentoring program that involves more than 200 parent mentors. Parents are a powerful force in connecting schools to neighborhoods, and teachers appreciate parent involvement.

Teachers:

Able to Focus on Teaching

√ The Blenheim School, a Missouri Caring Communities site, reported a 40% decrease in disruptive behavioral incidents after im-plementing a system for referring students to clinical therapy.

√ The Schools as the Center of Community initiative in Grand Forks, N.D., places a social worker, counselor and nurse in school buildings. Teachers report that the presence of these individuals improved the teaching and learning environment.

√ In a California Healthy Start school, a community school model that tries to overcome barriers to education by placing needed services in or near schools, a teacher reported the benefits of being able to refer student problems to on-site care, rather than seeing problems such as poor health reoccur day after day.

Communities:

Crime Reduction

√ The evaluation of the Waldbridge Elementary Caring Communities program in Missouri revealed that police, parents and teachers credit the initiative as a force in crime reduction.

√ National law enforcement organizations support quality after-school programs as effective strategies for reducing violence, theft, vandalism and gang activities.[26] An important component of quality after-school programming is a link to the school day; community schools establish that link.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association partners with schools in Chicago's Logan Square and Avondale communities. Their efforts have developed parents' leadership skills through a parent/teacher mentoring program that involves more than 200 parents.

Community School Resources

The number and variety of supports for collaboration, technical assistance, community education and advocacy that serve schools and communities attempting to initiate community schools has grown in concert with the number of initiatives. Illinois communities in any stage of community school development, ranging from first attempts at collaboration to extending school-based mental health services, can turn to these national, regional and local resources. For a list of organizations providing these supports, see the appendix.

In addition to funding geared specifically toward community school initiatives, community schools can leverage dollars aimed at an array of specific programs and services that can help further the community school goals.

At the national level, the Coalition for Community Schools spearheads the effort to connect communities and schools to resources. Their mission is to mobilize the resources and capacity in the public, private and non-profit sectors and their institutions to create a united movement for community schools.[27] This mission guides the coalition's work to improve education and to help students learn and grow while supporting and strengthening their families and communities.

The multiple potential funding resources for community schools illustrates the growing recognition that community schools achieve positive results. Community school initiatives can seek funding from state and federal public sources as well as from private foundations. For example, the Finance Project identified seven federal programs with $5.3 billion geared specifically toward community schools or out-of-school time initiatives.[28] The Polk Bros. Foundation, a Chicago-based foundation, provides support for non-profits working with Chicago Public School-based full service schools. Finally, in addition to seeking outside funding, collaborators can turn to money that already exists in schools or partner organizations to support activities consistent with the community school framework.

In addition to funding geared specifically towards community school initiatives, community schools can leverage dollars aimed at an array of specific programs and services that can help further the community school goals. The Finance Project identified 114 federal funding programs with the potential to fund community school and out-of-school- time initiatives. Funding from these programs can support particular aspects of community schools such as health centers, early childhood education, crime prevention programs and many more.

For example, 21st Century Community Learning Centers is a federal initiative which supports programs across the nation that provide expanded learning opportunities for children in safe, drug-free and supervised environments. Similarly, the state of Illinois and Illinois agencies sponsor a number of initiatives that fund aspects of community schools. A few of these initiatives include the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund and the Adult Education and Family Literacy programs offered through the Illinois State Board of Education and Safe to Learn offered through the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority.

In terms of private funding, multiple state-based and national foundations fund programs and services consistent with the community school framework and goals.

A Community School Strategy in Illinois: Recommendations

The community school framework is clearly consistent with the Illinois goals for education and the vision of the *Charter for Illinois Children*. Many Illinois communities have begun integrating the community school framework into their own efforts as illustrated by the examples discussed in this paper. Programs and services in many other communities could fit into this framework, as well. By taking the appropriate steps, Illinois can put its existing programming on the community school continuum and expand its efforts towards achieving lifelong learning and self-sufficiency for students beyond the school years.

In addition to the community-level efforts, multiple state agencies have initiated school-based or school-linked initiatives that illustrate their commitment to achieving positive results for our children, youth and families. Through Illinois schools, the state sponsors programs and services in areas such as physical health (e.g., clinics, nurses, outreach and education), mental health (e.g., social and emotional learning, counseling), child welfare, early childhood (e.g., pre-kindergarten programs), teen parent supports and juvenile justice. The state also implements funding initiatives such as the Illinois Department of Human Services' Teen REACH and system initiatives such as ISBE's Education to Careers[29] that enable communities to bring needed services and activities to their children and youth.

The following recommendations for achieving community schools and their positive outcomes in Illinois enlist the effort of state and local stakeholders in our children, youth, families and communities to build upon their positive work. Although either the state or communities may be better suited to take the lead on a particular recommendation, most of the recommendations require shared effort between stakeholders at all levels. All of the recommendations use the state and community work discussed in this and previous sections as a starting point. That is, existing state and community work can provide the necessary foundation for our next steps towards achieving community schools, and they can impart valuable lessons.

Recommendation 1

Develop a state-level task force that involves the variety of community school stakeholders to:

- √ Lead a statewide inventory of community school efforts in order to answer:
  1. Who are the community school collaborators?
  2. What programs and services do they enlist in their initiatives?
  3. How do community schools fund their initiatives?
  4. What are the goals and outcomes on which community schools focus, and how do community schools evaluate progress?
- √ Identify needs for developing and maintaining community schools.
- √ Identify opportunities for community schools.
- √ Identify the skills and capacities non-profits need in order to support schools' efforts to develop, implement and maintain community schools.
- √ Develop a framework and tools for local schools to facilitate their funding efforts.
- √ Develop a statewide strategic plan for implementing community schools.

Recommendation 2

Create a center for academics, policy-makers, educators, human service providers, families, non-profits and advocates from Illinois to come together to:

- √ Identify promising community school efforts taking place both in and out of Illinois.
- √ Learn from research and evaluation about evidence-based practices.
- √ Identify links between community school efforts and improved student performance.
- √ Formulate policy and program recommendations.
- √ Facilitate building partnerships and collaborations.
- √ Provide materials and information to a broad range of stakeholders.
- √ Improve systems for linking parents and families to schools and improve their capacity to work.

Recommendation 3

Establish and build the Kids Share Endowment to empower Illinois communities to collaboratively and creatively act for the healthy development of children and youth. The Kids Share Endowment would support and fund community collaborations that develop local initiatives to improve and promote positive outcomes for children, youth, families and communities across Illinois, and it would provide technical assistance to aid communities' work.

Community schools can provide our children and youth with academic excellence, lifelong learning and self-sufficiency beyond the school years while supporting development throughout the community. However, tremendous work remains to be done to achieve these results throughout Illinois.

In order to build statewide momentum, a variety of key stakeholders such as educators, parents and policy-makers, to name a few, need to engage in dialogue and promote community schools at all levels. We hope this paper will promote discussion regarding a topic relatively new to Illinois and create a shared understanding of the multiple positive results that community schools can create. We hope that these recommendations can aid Illinois' attempt to achieve these results.

Voices for Illinois Children would like to recognize the schools, organizations, agencies and individuals from across the state that have helped build the vision of what community schools can accomplish in Illinois for children, youth, families and communities. The community school framework and goals can be found in the agendas of parent groups and networks, teachers, principals, social service providers and state agency representatives.

Over the last two years, these groups have shared their visions and strategies through dialogue under the auspices of the Illinois Community Schools Partnership. The information-sharing of this partnership informed the efforts to write this policy brief and continue to inform community members' efforts to move community schools forward in Illinois.

Appendix

The organizations listed below are resources for achieving and supporting a community school. These organizations provide assistance and/or information regarding the components of designing and implementing community schools (e.g., funding, technical assistance, collaboration and advocacy). Additional resources can be accessed by contacting the Coalition for Community Schools or accessing their web site (first resource listed).

The Coalition for Community Schools
c/o Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-822-8405
www.communityschools.org

The Finance Project
1000 Vermont Ave. NW
Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: 202-628-4200
www.financeproject.org

National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon St.
Flint, MI 48503
Phone: 810-238-0463
www.nccenet.org

North Central Regional Education Laboratory
1120 E. Diehl Road
Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563-1486
Phone: 1-800-356-2735 or 630-649-6500
www.ncrel.org

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-0498
Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN
www.ed.gov

Communities in Schools, Inc.
The North Central Field Support Center
815 W. Van Buren
Suite 319
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: 312-226-1076
www.cisnet.org

National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway
Suite 91A
Fairfax, VA 22030-2401
Phone: 703-359-8973
www.ncea.com

National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
3003 N. Charles St., Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218
Phone: 410-516-8800
www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/default.htm

Polk Bros. Foundation
420 N. Wabash Ave.
Suite 204
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: 312-527-4684
www.polkbrosfdn.org

Voices for Illinois Children
208 S. LaSalle St.
Suite 1490
Chicago, IL 60604-1103
Phone: 312-456-0600
www.voices4kids.org

Endnotes

[1] Illinois State Board of Education. *Transitional Bilingual Education and Transitional Program of Instruction Evaluation Report.* Illinois: Author, 2000. Available at www.isbe.state.il.us/research.
[2] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Kids Count Data Book.* Baltimore, MD: Author, 2000.
[3] Voices for Illinois Children. *Envisioning the Future: Illinois Kids Count 2001.* Chicago: Author, 2000.
[4] Cox, M.J., Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., & Pianta, R.C. Teachers' judgment of problems into the transition into kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.* In press. As cited in Peth-Pierece, R. *A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School with the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed.* Monograph commissiooned by the Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network. 2000.
[5] Illinois State Board of Education. *Elementary and Secondary School Educational Statistics.* Illinois: Author, 2000. Available at www.isbe.state.il.us/research.
[6] Voices for Illinois Children. *Envisioning the Future: Illinois Kids Count 2001.* Chicago: Author, 2000.
[7] Ibid., Based on 1997 data.
[8] Ibid., Based on 2000 data.
[9] Ibid., Based on 2000 data.
[10] The Social Development Research group developed this dual focus on risk and protective factors to promote the positive development of children and youth and to prevent adolescent health and behavior problems. More information on their work is available at http://staff.washington.edu/sdrg.
[11] Illinois State Board of Education. *World-Class Education for the 21st Century: The Challenge and the Vision.* Available at www.isbe.state.il.us/board/mission.html. This vision was adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education as a centerpiece for school improvement efforts. It was developed by the citizens of Illinois through a process supported by the governor, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Business Roundtable.
[12] For more information on the *Charter for Illinois Children* or to become a *Charter* endorser, contact Voices for Illinois Children at 312-456-0600 or visit www.charterforillinoischildren.org.
[13] Henderson, A.T., and Berla, N. *A new Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement.* Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994.
[14] Dryfoos, J.G. *Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date.* Coalition for Community Schools, 2000.
[15] Information regarding the standards and their development is available on the National PTA web site at www.pta.org/programs/invstand.htm.
[16] National Association of Secondary School Principals. "Community/Full-Service Schools." *Bulletin, 83*(611). December 1999.
[17] Peth-Pierece, R. *A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School with the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed.* Monograph commissioned by the Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network. 2000.
[18] Roth, J. and Brooks-Gunn, J. What do adolescents need for healthy development? Implications for youth policy. *Social Policy Report; Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away, 24*, 2000.
[19] Chung, An-Me. *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart.* U.S. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 2000.
[20] Ibid.
[21] More information on California Healthy Start is available at www.cde.ca.gov/healthystart.
[22] More information on Missouri's Caring Communities initiative is available at www.dese.state.mo.us/divurbteached/caringcom.
[23] More information on Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Services Centers is available at http://cfc.state.ky.us/frysc.
[24] All results come from one of two sources unless otherwise noted:
Dryfoos, J. G. *Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date.* Coalition for Community Schools. 1998. and Wynn, J., Meyer, S., & Richards-Schuster, K. *Furthering Education: The Relationship of Schools and Other Organizations.* Illinois: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 1999.

[25] Cook, T.D., Hunt, H.D., & Murphy, R.F. *Comer's School Development Program in Chicago: A Theory-Based Evaluation.* Chicago: Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, 1998. Available at www.northwestern.edu/IPR/publications/educationwp.html.

[26] The Afterschool Corporation (TASC). *The Impact of After-School Program,.* 2000.

[27] This is the self-described work of the Coalition for Community Schools. More information is available at www.communityschools.org.

[28] Reder, N. R. *Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives.* Washington D.C.: The Finance Project, 2000.

The Finance Project develops and disseminates information, knowledge, tools, and technical assistance for improved policies, programs, and financing strategies in order to achieve the following mission: "To support decision making that produces and sustains good results for children, families, and communities." More information about the Finance Project can be found at www.financeproject.org.

[29] Education to Careers (*etc*) is an Illinois State Board of Education system initiative that takes an interdisciplinary approach to achieving the following mission: "To improve the quality and relevance of education for all students so they are prepared for personally and professionally rewarding careers in the 21st century." More information about *etc* can be accessed at www.isbe.net/etc/.

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